

ATEL Committee Meeting
Public Utilities Commission
December 8, 2011
9:00 AM

Attendees:

Roberta Greene Whittemore, Denise Corson, James Litvack, , Jim Lanni , Pam Kling, Melissa Rosenberg, Courtenay Petracca and Cart Reporter.

- 1. The Interpreter that was originally scheduled for the meeting cancelled due to a long-term assignment, and Interpreter Referral was unable to find a replacement. Fortunately, our new back-up plan was utilized, and CART services were automatically scheduled. However, we were planning on have a guest speaker, Art Moore, whom needs an interpreter to voice for him; therefore, we canceled his visit and just did a conference by phone with Jim Skjeveland from Sprint.**
- 2. Minutes reviewed and accepted.**
- 3. Committee Update – Sean Gill resigned form the Committee, due to moving to D.C.; however, we are hoping that the new Hamilton Relay Representative to replace him. Both Doris Simas and James Litvack, agreed to renew their term with the Committee.**
- 4. Cox Communications Update- Joe was unable to attend the meeting, but informed Denise that something has been approved but didn't have the detail yet.**
- 5. Legislative Update- Jim Lanni stated that due to time constraints,**

he was unable to draft a bill with the proposed language changes that would allow for wireless devices. Jim Lanni stated that this proposed change would probably go thru the Corporations Committee, due to the fact that this is not a monetary change, but has to do with utilities.

Jim Lanni stated that many of us should testify at the Committee, but it shouldn't be an issue to pass thru legislation.

6. Wireless Devices - Guest speaker via conference phone Jim Skjeveland discussed Sprint's Equipment Distribution (605)376-4081.

Jim stated that approximately 10 states have some type of wireless program: Hawaii, California, Utah, Arkansas, Texas, Minnesota, Mississippi, Connecticut, New Mexico, Kentucky, Maryland and Maine.

Also, many states have begun the process of researching their wireless options: RI, Florida, North Carolina, South Dakota, and Georgia. There are many considerations for having a wireless program that need to be considered and Jim stated that Sprint is flexible with coming up with plan that work state by state. One issue to consider is that the typical land line phone has a shelf life of about 5 years, whereas a cell phone is about 18 months. Another consideration, is that there is a significant outlay of money when individuals receive their equipment: There is the equipment charge + 1st month payment + pro rated current month + \$36 activation charge + Sprint requires a credit check on all customers, which tend to range from \$100-\$250 (about 85% of individuals pass)- all due at the time of activation. Denise had researched with other states what was the biggest obstacle to their wireless program and this was this large fee due at the inception of

the contract. Denise and Roberta had discussed prior to the meeting some possibilities to avoid this set back that is occurring in other programs. Some thoughts were could we come up with a dollar amount that we are willing to spend per client, and allow this predetermined fee to be used differently per client's needs. For instance, a client could choose a lesser priced phone, but have the ATEL program cover the deposit and activation fee, and if anything is left over, this amount could be used to reduce their first month's bill.

. Jim from Sprint stated that typically the phone, security and activation, is billed separately from the monthly bill. The committee also asked whether Sprint provide gift cards that could be used to offset some of the fees. These are all suggestions that Jim stated he would research to see if these would be options. Another suggestion was just to buy the wireless phones in bulk for a discount rate, and it's up to the customer to decide whether they want to sign a monthly contract with a wireless company, or just be a pay as you go phone; this would allow the initial costs to the customer be significantly reduced, and not have the ATEL Program get involved in the complications of contracts.

7. Open Discussion- Hamilton Relay donated 5 Captel phones to the state of RI to be used as demonstration devices in RI. Denise and Courtenay thought that the Newtork RI offices would be a great location for them; since they are strategically located thru the state they would be easily assessable to all Rhode Islanders. . Denise and Courtenay met with Vincent Rossi (Coordinator of E&T Programs) , Marie DeRoche (Chief of Employment & Training Programs) and

Hector Rivera (Chief of Employment & Training Programs) at the Department of Labor to discuss the possibility of using the Network RI offices. They were very interested in the Captel and our program suggestion and will be getting back to us next year.

8. The time and date of this year's quarterly meetings is scheduled at 9AM- 11AM at the PUC on Thursday, March 8, 2012, June 7, 2012, September 13, 2012, December 6, 2012.